

**MOTION BY SUPERVISORS HILDA L. SOLIS
AND KATHRYN BARGER**

March 12, 2019

Pet Friendly Housing

Los Angeles County has consistently ranked as one of the most expensive housing markets in the nation. A lack of rental housing affordable to lower income households, exceeds a deficit of 550,000 housing units – leading to upward pressure on rents. Median rent in Los Angeles County increased 32% between 2000 and 2017, while the median renter household income decreased 3% during the same period. Renters must earn more than four times the local minimum wage to afford the May 2018 Los Angeles County median rent of \$2,610. The 2018 homeless count revealed that there are 39,396 unsheltered homeless persons in the County on any given night.

Many of the households affected by the difficult housing market, including those experiencing homelessness, have pets that serve as companions, support, and security. For seniors and people with disabilities, a companion animal may be a pet owner’s only connection and source of comfort. The bond between people and their

MOTION

SOLIS _____

RIDLEY-THOMAS _____

KUEHL _____

BARGER _____

HAHN _____

pets is integral to their physical and mental well-being from childhood throughout the life cycle.

Many private landlords and most homeless shelters have restrictions that prohibit pets, leading to the difficult choice between relinquishing a beloved pet and maintaining a place to live. Further, homeless persons may forego important appointments that can lead to services connections, like medical appointments, because they are unable to make accommodations for their pet.

Statistics compiled by public animal shelters and animal welfare organizations have shown that one of the most prominent reasons given by pet guardians for relinquishing their animals is their inability to find rental housing that allows pets. The percentage of relinquishments attributed to landlord "no pet" rules at times has approached 20%. One national study revealed that those who rent are more likely to need to rehome their pets for housing issues than for any other reason. In Los Angeles County, housing was a reason given for roughly 24 percent of dog surrenders and 20 percent of cat surrenders between 2016 and 2018. Historically, 29% of these pets will ultimately be euthanized.

The County is taking steps to mitigate these unfortunate consequences of the housing crisis. For example, the County initiated a pilot program at five homeless shelters that implemented enhancements to decrease barriers for clients accessing shelters with service and emotional support animals, including installation of animal kennels, providing pet supplies, funding for pet registration, dog training services, and funding to repair damage to facilities caused by pets. In accordance with the Homeless Initiative Strategy B4, Facilitate Utilization of Federal Housing Subsidies, the Community

Development Commission is administering funds to cover pet deposits to landlords and to repair damage caused by pets. The Department of Animal Care and Control (DACC) offers subsidized services to pet owners experiencing homelessness through its COLA HI program. Veterinary care, pet supplies and temporary boarding are available at all seven of the DACC Animal Care Centers. In addition, DACC is working with the Department of Mental Health (DMH) to develop a pet boarding program for DMH clients.

The federal Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) has required its public housing and all HUD-insured and/or –financed housing for senior or disabled households to be pet-friendly since 2000 and 2008 respectively. The State of California passed a law in 2017 to require that all housing financed by the Department of Housing and Community Development allow pets. And, the City of Los Angeles recently directed its City Attorney to draft an ordinance allowing tenants to have pets at all affordable rental housing built with City funding. The County’s commitment to pet-friendly housing would maximize the number of pet-friendly options for Los Angeles County residents, reduce barriers to maintain stable and affordable housing, and reduce intake pressure on City and County animal shelters resulting from housing-related relinquishment.

WE, THEREFORE, MOVE that the Board of Supervisors direct the Chief Executive Office’s Homeless Initiative, the Department of Animal Care and Control, and the Community Development Commission to return to the Board in 90 days with a draft ordinance that would require that all County- funded housing allow residents to have pets.